

According to the Constitution, the President does not need to come to Congress for permission on an agreement, but I think we have a responsibility to the American taxpayer and our men and women in uniform to discuss an agreement that will keep more taxpayer dollars and more troops in Afghanistan in the coming years.

Just a couple of weeks ago the Marine Corps announced that the marines at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina's Third District, which I represent, are getting ready to deploy to Afghanistan. When does it end, Mr. Speaker? When does it end?

I would like to quote Grant Filbeck from Erie, Pennsylvania, who wrote a letter to the Marine Corps Times last week about Afghanistan:

I believe in the mission 100 percent, but we have given the Afghans the tools to succeed, and it's up to them to use them. We have been in the country for more than 13 years. That is ridiculous. We have spent so much money funding these guys. If the Afghans want to fight for their country, then they will, or the Taliban will take over without much of a fight.

These two men whose letters I referenced are marines who have been to Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, this is a poster from a book titled, "How U.S. Taxpayers Bankroll the Taliban." It was written several years ago by Douglas Wissing. It is a great expose on how the taxpayers' money ends up in the hands of the Taliban, to kill Americans and to blow up the buildings that we built for them with taxpayer money.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, we owe it to the American people, our military, and our Constitution to debate war. As James Madison wrote: "The power to declare war, including the power of judging the causes of war, is fully and exclusively vested in the legislature." I agree with James Madison and urge the Congress to meet its constitutional duty to debate war and not let any President have an AUMF to send our young men and women overseas to die and see the taxpayers' money wasted.

May God continue to bless our troops, and may God continue to bless America.

A SQUANDERED OPPORTUNITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. McCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my deep disappointment in the address by the President last night in this Chamber.

Twenty years ago, President Clinton was in a similar position. He realized his policies weren't working; they had just been overwhelmingly rejected by voters and he faced the first Republican Congress in 40 years. So in his State of the Union Message 20 years ago, President Clinton changed course, proclaiming: "The era of Big Government is over." And he made good on

that proclamation. He reached across the aisle to the Republican Congress, and together they achieved some amazing things for the American people.

Together, they reduced Federal spending by a remarkable 4 percent of GDP. They reformed entitlement spending—in Bill Clinton's words, "ending welfare as we know it." They approved what amounted to the biggest capital gains tax cut in American history. They produced the only four balanced budgets that we have seen in 50 years.

And the economy blossomed. We enjoyed one of the longest periods of economic expansion in our Nation's history.

It wasn't a bipartisan lovefest. They clashed bitterly on matters great and small. Yet their accomplishments produced prosperity for our Nation and ensured President Clinton's popularity that endures to this day.

President Obama thus has a working, proven model to salvage the last 2 years of his failed Presidency, and instead, he is squandering it. The President says he wants to sock it to the wealthy by placing new and heavy taxes on investment. But the simple truth of the matter is, when you tax something, you get less of it. When you tax investment, you get less investment at precisely that time when our economy desperately needs greater investment for more and better-paying jobs.

A smaller percentage of our people are working today than at any time in more than 30 years. Until last year, median family income had fallen throughout this administration. The American people don't want more government handouts. They need more jobs and better jobs, and that means more investment, not less. They need a job market that isn't flooded with millions of illegal immigrants undercutting their wages and opportunities. Indeed, it was recently estimated that the number of illegal immigrants working in direct defiance of Federal law is as much as the net increase in jobs throughout this administration. Most Americans are not getting ahead.

We now suffer the highest corporate tax rate in the industrialized world, and American businesses are fleeing from it.

Who would have thought that socialist Sweden would today be considered a tax haven compared to the United States? Our people need those American jobs back in America.

Yet the President seeks to raise taxes still further at a time when the Federal Government is already extracting record tax revenues from our people. The percentage of our economy now consumed by Federal taxes is well above the 40-year average. Our economic problems are not the fault of taxpayers for not paying enough taxes.

The President says he wants to help the middle class, but the proposals he set before us last night would drag the middle class still further down the

dark road of debt and doubt and despair that we have been on. If higher taxes and more burdensome regulations were the path to prosperity, we should be enjoying a new economic golden age today. If higher government spending and soak-the-rich policies were the antidote to income inequality, we should today be enjoying an egalitarian paradise.

The reality is these policies have never worked. They have suppressed what should have been a robust economic recovery. They have increased the economic inequalities in our society. They have buried our children under a mountain of debt that will stalk them for the rest of their lives.

The answer to income inequality and economic stagnation is genuine economic growth that requires reducing the burdens that government has placed on our economy. It worked when Bill Clinton did it, when Ronald Reagan did it, and when John F. Kennedy did it. In fact, Kennedy was right: a rising tide lifts all boats. Yet Barack Obama clings obstinately to the opposite policies. It shouldn't surprise us that he is getting the opposite results.

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He had a fleeting opportunity last night to bend to the will of the voters, reverse these policies, and redeem his place in history. Instead, Whittier's words seem appropriate this morning:

Of all sad words of tongue or pen, this saddest are these: "It might have been."

HONORING WILLIAM M. ALLEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. JOLLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JOLLY. Mr. Speaker, this past December, the community of Pinellas County, Florida—indeed, the Nation—lost an American hero, William M. Allen.

Bill Allen was 83 years old and had served in the United States Army from 1949 to 1953 as a sergeant, Charlie Company, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division.

Mr. Allen was a prisoner of war from January 1, 1951, until August 1953, held captive during the Korean war after being overcome by Chinese troops. Mr. Allen was just 19 years old at the time.

To those who knew Mr. Allen, he was one of those remarkable people that left a lasting impression on you after just a single encounter. He was a patriot. He would share his stories not for his own attention, but to impart on each of us the story of sacrifice that our men and women in uniform make so that the United States—all Americans—might live in peace, protected by those who serve.

Mr. Allen's story was most human. In his own words, he wrote this about his enlistment in the Army and subsequent deployment:

Then there are people like myself, the little guy who went to Korea as a young kid, still wet behind the ears, fresh out of high

school, who joined a peacetime army, but soon found himself in one of this country's most controversial military and political situations known at that time.

When it was over, we came home as veterans; no longer were we the kids down the street. We were now that guy home from war, the war that only a very few knew very much about, a war that was unpopular, and a war that was soon to be forgotten, forgotten only by those who didn't have to fight it.

Mr. Allen did fight that war for us, and his sacrifice truly became real the day he knew he had been overcome by Chinese forces. He recalls wondering at that very moment would they shoot him, and in those brief moments, Mr. Allen recalled that he knew then that the course for his life would forever change. Two things he said he knew for sure: one, he was still alive; and, two, he was now a prisoner of war.

Indeed, the course of Mr. Allen's life had changed forever. He endured many terrible moments as a POW. His family endured much grief, much worry, much pain; but his life had also changed forever because Mr. Allen would later find another calling in life, that of teaching others the importance of service, teaching about the sacrifice of our men and women in uniform, sharing with others the true cost of freedom.

He would share these lessons with anyone he would encounter, but he also did something very special. He contributed many of his personal items from the war—letters, telegrams, newspaper articles—to the Armed Forces History Museum in Largo, Florida, for a permanent display dedicated to his POW story. Moreover, he then volunteered his time to teach young people at the museum the very lessons of service, to share with visitors his deeply personal story.

Mr. Speaker, Bill Allen served our Nation in war, but he then served his community here at home, passing down a rich legacy to generations that follow. I was one of those individuals who had an opportunity to share in that story, and I am blessed by my experiences with Mr. Allen.

For his military service, Mr. Allen was awarded many medals, including the Combat Infantry Badge, the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, and others.

Mr. Allen is survived by his wife, Helen, of whom he once wrote:

If she was not with me, I don't know what I would have done. She was not only my wife, but she is my best friend.

Mr. Allen is also survived by his children, Susan and Bill, and many grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, a few months ago, before Mr. Allen's passing, he presented me with a copy of his book, "My Old Box of Memories," and inscribed on the inside jacket is his message, "Freedom is not free." Indeed, we know freedom is not free.

Today, I rise to remember and honor Mr. Allen, to remember and honor his legacy, a legacy that will live on through the many people he has touched and, most importantly, through individuals, children, and

youth that he devoted his time to educating about the cost of war, the importance of sacrifice, and the dignity of service.

I thank Mr. Allen today for his service to our Nation and to pay a most fitting tribute, that for a man who sacrificed so much on behalf of our Nation, today is remembered in the well of this House—the people's House—by Members of Congress and by a grateful Nation.

May God bless Bill Allen; may God bless his wife, Helen; may God bless his family; and may God richly bless each and every American who today serves and protects and defends the United States of America.

RESTORE AN OPPORTUNITY GOVERNMENT THROUGH RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCCLINTOCK). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, last night, we gathered here in the House of Representatives for a great American tradition: the State of the Union—the Presidential address where we celebrate openness and transparency in our government, where a vision is laid out that we are free to disagree with or agree with components of but, nonetheless, points to this great American ideal that we are a people who self-govern and that we are accountable in an open way to the people who sent us here, even in the midst of deep philosophical divides about the direction of our Nation—and, of course, the world was watching.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important, though, that we take a moment of reflection and be honest about this moment in time and the current conditions in our society. Many Americans do face downward mobility, stagnant wages, and an increased cost of living.

Many people feel very abandoned in the face of a Washington-Wall Street axis, where more and more power is concentrated into fewer and fewer hands. But I think we have to be careful about something. We have to be careful about seeing the solution as lying in more government.

I think our Nation deserves a smart and effective government, and I think our job here in Congress is to continue in an open way, look at the past, and see what worked and see what doesn't work, to let go of that which is tired and old and worn out and continues to linger, and to invest more in that which is smart and effective and can truly build a good society that creates opportunity for all.

Mr. Speaker, I also believe that we shouldn't divide ourselves by class and income and that, in a healthy economy, it is one that is focused on small business. This is where most new jobs are created in our country.

Particularly for young people, I think we need to create a culture of

creativity, one in which a person who has an idea can seize the moment and use the gifts of their own two hands and their own intellect to make good things, to create benefit for others, to create jobs, hire people, protect families, and to make a contribution to society.

Many young people want to pursue these avenues; yet we have to be honest about what is happening. We are entering, in this country, into an entrepreneurial winter. What does that mean? In other words, the number of startup businesses—small businesses—is less than the number of small businesses dying.

We do not have a net increase in the number of small businesses; and, again, this is where most Americans live and work, making good things for others, in small business. That is where jobs are created.

How do we address this problem? Well, the tendency, again, in our body is to think about public solutions, but let's examine—not through my opinion but just the analytics—as to why small businesses are not creating new jobs and are not starting up as aggressively as they have in the past.

It is really two things. It is health care and regulations. Smart regulations are necessary to protect the health and well-being of all Americans, but when you have oppressive regulations that tend to stack the deck toward those who are larger and can hire an army of lawyers and accountants, it represses the ability of small businesses to take risks and create jobs.

The second problem we have is health care. Mr. Speaker, I got an email yesterday from someone who said: "Congressman, my health care has gone up so much that I have to move into government housing." Now, think of the irony of that.

Again, we need the right type of health care reform, one that is going to reduce costs and improve health care outcomes while we protect vulnerable persons. But what has happened? Some people have been helped by the new law, but many, many families have been hurt with escalating health care costs, and, again, it creates an environment in which small business is repressed.

Mr. Speaker, again, I think our government should be smart and effective, and I think that is what most Americans want, but Washington continues to remain mired in mediocrity, and political dysfunction and partisan gridlock have made smart and proper government difficult.

This arthritic recovery has dimmed the financial prospects of too many individuals who, again, have stagnant wages or who have given up hope and feel directionless, isolated, and alone. We can do better, and we must do better.

Despite these challenges, I believe the start of a new Congress is an exciting time to renew our government and this promise of our Nation. I would like